

Raid on L.A. SNCC Office

Fifth Estate Collective

1968

Everybody knows what the cops and the National Guard are supposed to do during a “civil disturbance,” right? They are supposed to stop Black people from looting, burning, and killing. The only problem with this formulation is that these guardians of law and order usually involve themselves in the very activities they are supposed to be suppressing.

The classic examples are of course the Detroit and Newark uprisings of last Summer. In our city cops went home with carloads of loot after charging the original looters as curfew violators and taking the goodies for themselves.

Wing Commander McMath of the Michigan Air National Guard sent a letter to all Michigan Guardsmen asking them to please bring back all of the equipment the soldiers had helped themselves to at the taxpayers expense.

In Newark, Guardsmen broke windows and set fires in stores previously untouched because of a “soul brother” designation written on their windows.

The fact that the police and Guard were either carelessly responsible for those who died in the rebellion or that they were involved in out and out murder is indisputable. The most reprehensible incident at the Algiers Motel where three black youths were executed by the Detroit Police still remains without a conviction of the officers responsible. It is not a wonder that the California Black Panther Party always refers to the police as “pigs.”

There have been no deaths attributable to snipers according to the President’s Commission on Civil Disorders. These deaths were, in fact, due to the careless and massive over reaction by the police and the Guard.

Riots and rebellions are invariably triggered by instances of police mispractice. One that didn’t happen occurred in Los Angeles on the night after Martin Luther King was killed.

On April 5, the Los Angeles Police raided the L.A. headquarters of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and arrested two members of the organization for possession of rifles and 1,000 rounds of ammunition.

However, just for good measure the cops broke down the back door (they had just left through the front) and began systematically destroying the office.

They wrecked two mimeograph machines, poured ink on the floor, ripped posters from the wall, and seized the group’s membership list.

Not satisfied with their work they stirred a box of carpet tacks into a cooking pot of spaghetti. The Law and Order boys.

What would Che do?



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Fifth Estate #53, May 1-15, 1968

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